10

A true

NARRATIVE

OF

The Great and Terrible

FIRE

IN

Southwark,

On *Fryday* the 26th of *May*, 1676.

Whereby those eminent Innes,

The *Queens-head*, The *Talbot*, The *George*, The *White-hart*, The *Kings head*, and the *Green-dragon*.

Together with the Prison of the Counter, the Meal-market, and about Five hundred Dwelling-Houses (as moderately computed) were burn'd down, blown up, and wholly destroyed.

With Permission, *Ro. L'Estrange.*

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The great and lamentable Fire of *Southwark*.

THe late ſad and diſmal Fire, whereby the beſt part of the Borough of *Southwark* is deſtroyed, both for the number of houſes conſumed, and greatneſs of the total loſs, muſt be acknowledged to be one of the greateſt and moſt dreadful Fires that have happened in or about the City of *London* within the memory of man; that never-to-be-forgotten Calamity, *Sept.* 2. 1666. wherein no leſs than Thirteen thouſand and two hundred houſes periſhed, onely excepted.

This deplorable Accident in *Southwark* began, or was firſt diſcovered, on *Friday* the 26 of this inſtant *May*, between three and four of the clock in the morning, in the houſe of a Colour man, or Oyl ſhop (for they dealt in both Commodities) ſituate between the *George* and *Talbot* Innes. The Maſter of the houſe, and moſt of his family, were about ſeven or eight miles off in the Country, and no body, as 'tis ſaid, left at home, but one of his ſons and a Servant-maid. By what particular fatal Accident the Fire was firſt occaſion'd or begun, is yet unknown: 'tis very probable many will judge and impute it to that common cauſe of ſuch Diſaſters, *viz.* neglect and careleſneſs; others may have other Conjectures, but all grounded on no knowledge or proof, but the meer reſults of their active and ſuſpicious Imaginations, as far as yet

I can understand by all those various, and some quite contrary reports I have heard concerning it.

'Tis affirmed, that the first that took notice of a Fire in the house were some Herb people going to Market, who it seems were in such unlucky haste as not to regard it. The people belonging to the house alledge there had been no fire in the house for the space of three or four days before, and that they went to bed in very seasonable time: and indeed, the young man is known to be a sober, temperate, and careful person: nor did the Watch, who stood all night very near, perceive any danger. But the first that made an open discovery of it, were some Letter-carriers going according to their custom early to the Post Office, passing by, saw a great light at the Cellar-window which opened to the street; and thereupon looking down, they saw a fire in the Cellar, but then so small and inconsiderable, that they say if they could presently have got in, and had water ready, they do not doubt but two or three Pailfuls would have quencht it. But while they spent time in calling to the people within, who being fast asleep could not for some time be made to hear, and the outward door was so strong that they endeavoured several times in vain to break it open: In the mean time, I say, the fire being got into the floor of the shop, met with great store of Oil and combustible matter, and in an instant set the shop and stayers on a flame; so that now the distracted young man and servant-maid, though they were awakened with horrour, could not come down from their chambers to go forth into the street, but were forced

forced to get out at a chamber window, some say a back-door to the *Talbot*-Inne, and so wonderfully preserved their lives, but were forced to leave the house and all in it to the mercy of the raging flames.

Several Engines commonly made use of for casting up of water on such occasions, were immediately sent for, and brought with all imaginable speed. The Pipes were every where cut, and what water could be procured made use of by the said Engines, as likewise by Buckets, *&c.* But the fire being fed with Oil, *&c.* was grown so fierce and mighty, as to bid defiance to all endeavours, and became rather the more raging for those petty sprinklings, which did but increase, in stead of mitigating its Fury.

The houses contiguous and adjoyning quickly took fire, and then their united flames were so violent and excessive, that the heat or sparkles, or both, carryed the dismal Conflagration cross the street, whose narrowness just at that place, more than any where else, and the unhappie situation of an old rotten timber-house jutting over exactly opposite, contributing thereunto; and now the Fiery Torrent like an invading Conqueror spread its flaming Colours through the Air on both sides the way, and carried ruine and desolation along with it at its pleasure.

No endeavours were wanting to check its progress. A great number of houses were blown up by the order of the vigilant Magistrates of the City, who (together with divers persons of Quality) were present all the day, and omitted no care or personal pains to succour the distressed inhabitants; and by their own exam-

example, as well as power, obliged thousands to contribute their helping hands.

The Counter and Court-house at S. *Margarets* hill were opportunely blown up, and thereby the other back-street leading to the water-side in a great measure preserved. The Wind was all the forenoon indifferent calm, otherwise a greater destruction might have happened, as likewise, if it had not about noon by a singular providence changed a Point or two, and thereby saved S. *Thomas*'s from being burned. Yet it continued still raging, in spite of all opposition, from about four a clock in the morning till seven or eight at night. And extraordinary fear all people were in, that S. *Thomas*'s Church and Hospital (that noble Monument of Charity) as likewise S. *Saviours* (commonly called *Mary Overies*) Church, would have been consumed. But through the gracious mercy of God, and the indefatigable industry of the Magistrates, there were all three preserved, though not without some considerable damages respectively sustained. The number of dwelling-houses in all destroyed by this Disaster, though it cannot be yet exactly given or set forth, yet is by the inhabitants and most intelligent persons computed to be about 500.

As for particular places that suffer'd, we may in the first place reckon those ancient and eminent Inns, whereof six are utterly demolisht; that is to say, *The Queens head*, *The Talbot*, *The George*, (which about six or seven years ago run the same fate, and was excellently rebuilt) *The White hart*, *The Kings head*, and *The Green Dragon* in *Foul lane*. That curious plea-

pleasant place called *Three-Crown-Court*, is now nothing but Rubbish and Ashes. The Meal-market standing in the middle of the street totally consumed, and (since the passage cleared) no signe left to know where it stood.

The Limits of the Ruines, or parts burned, are as follows: On the East side of the way, from the *Queens Arms* Tavern, situate and still standing about a dozen doors below the *Spur* Inn towards the South. All along to S. *Thomas* his Hospital just below the Meal-market, towards the North; the Porch of which Hospital is broken down, and some other damage done, but the main body of the house safe; and backwards all the Courts, Inne-yards, Stables, and other dwellings as far as the ditches, to a very great bredth.

Then on the Western side of the way, from S. *Margarets* hill clear down to S. *Mary Overies* Church, and the passage out of the High-street into the Church-yard, about the middle or further of the Butcher-row, and about fifteen houses from *Pepper alley*, and thirty or thereabouts before you come to the *Bear* Tavern at the Bridge-foot.

S. *Mary Overies* Church in some parts took fire twice or thrice, but was happily quencht again: but the little Chappel towards the East-end is much pul-led down and ruined. It had been impossible (it's thought) to have preserv'd that stately Fabrick from being destroyed; had not all the houses near it towards the Fire been blown up in time, which put a stop to it, so that it went no further that way. Backwards on this Western side there are a great number

of

of houſes loſt, as all *Fowl lane*. The Church-yard, ſeveral Alleys, and one ſide of the back-ſtreet down to S. *Mary Overies* Dock.

After the Fire was ſuppoſed to be well ſtopt and maſter'd, about 10 a clock at night it ſtrangely broke out again at ſome diſtance near S. *Mary Overies* Church, and as it were on the other ſide of it; but by the ſeaſonable blowing up one houſe on fire, and ſome other means of prevention, 'twas hindred from doing any further miſchief.

There were many houſes blown up, and thereby (eſpecially in the morning, before the danger was underſtood) ſeveral unwary people that could not be got out of the way when notice was given for firing the Train, happen'd to be kill'd, ſome ſay twenty or more, and ſeveral others ſorely wounded.

If we conſider the number of houſes quite deſtroy'd, and how conſiderable this part of the Borough was for Wholeſale men and great dealers, as alſo the loſs in removing Goods for fear, and damage ſuſtained by houſes yet ſtanding, (the Blowing up of one houſe ſhattering to pieces all the Windows, and ſometimes Chimneys of the houſes about it to a great diſtance. ſadly viſible in the ruinous Windows of S. *Mary Overies* Church, S. *Thomas*'s Church and Hoſpital) I ſay, if we conſider all this, we cannot but judge the total damage of this dreadful Calamity muſt amount to a mighty and exceeding Sum: but what, or how much exactly, is not, and very probably never will or can be known.

FINIS.